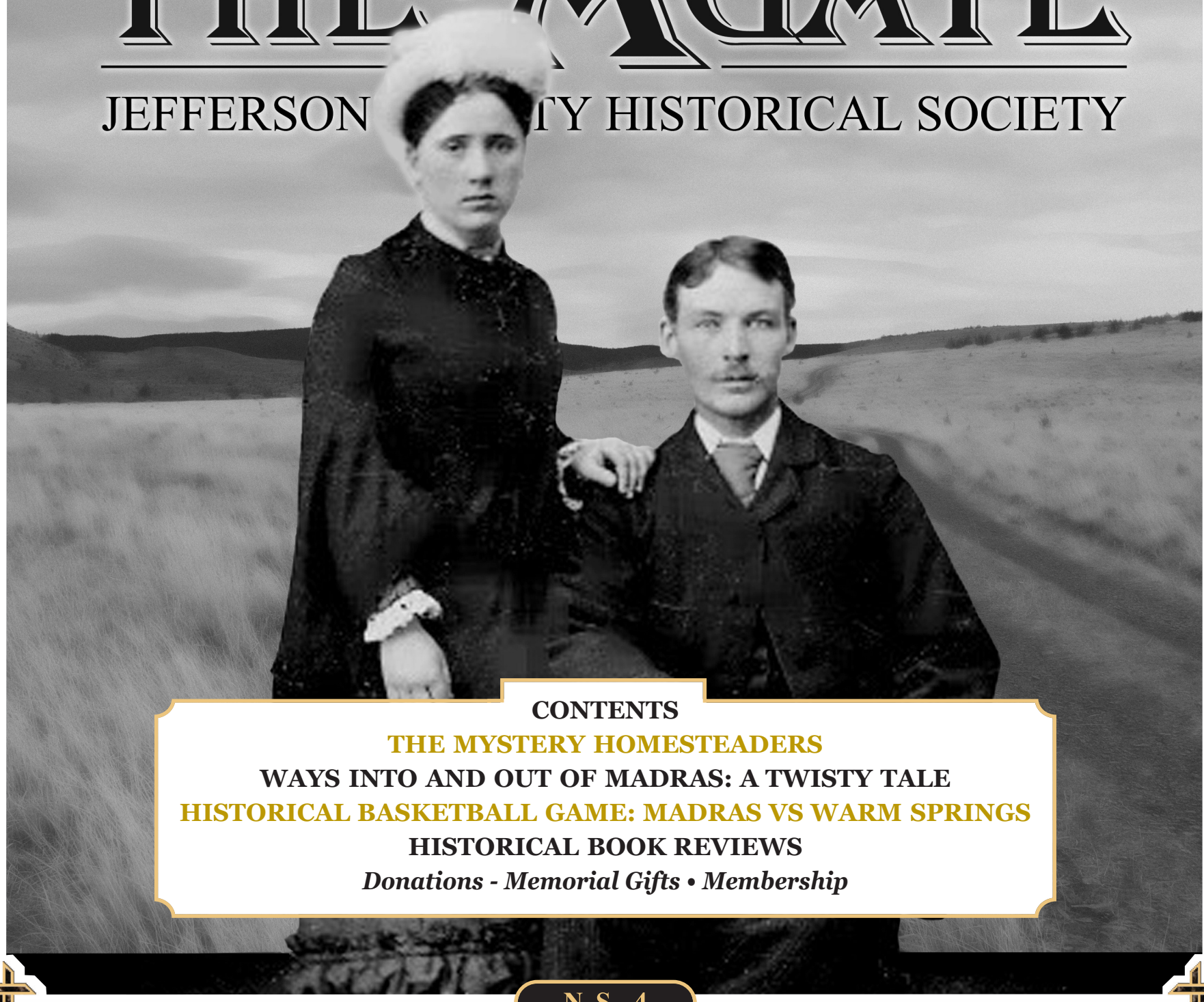
— FALL 2015 —

THE • AGATE

JEFFERSON [illegible]TY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



CONTENTS

N.S. 4

Welcome to the Agate #4

Welcome to the fourth issue in our new, expanded-format series of THE AGATE!

As you've already noticed, if you've received your copy with this week's *Madras Pioneer*, we have decided (with support from the JCHS Board of Directors) to continue for another issue our experiment in #3 with extended *Pioneer* distribution, and with "historical" ads to help defray extra costs. As with #3, JCHS members who do not subscribe to the *Pioneer* will receive this issue as usual by mail. We continue to be eager to expand the readership of THE AGATE, and through that to widen public awareness of the Jefferson County Historical Society and increase its membership.

We're always grateful to hear from our readers about what you like and don't like about this publication, and what local-history topics you'd like us to cover. And if you've seen enough in these two special "Pioneer" issues to consider joining the Historical Society and thereby support THE AGATE and our other historical endeavors: well, a membership form is waiting for you on the back cover!

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The Mystery Homesteaders

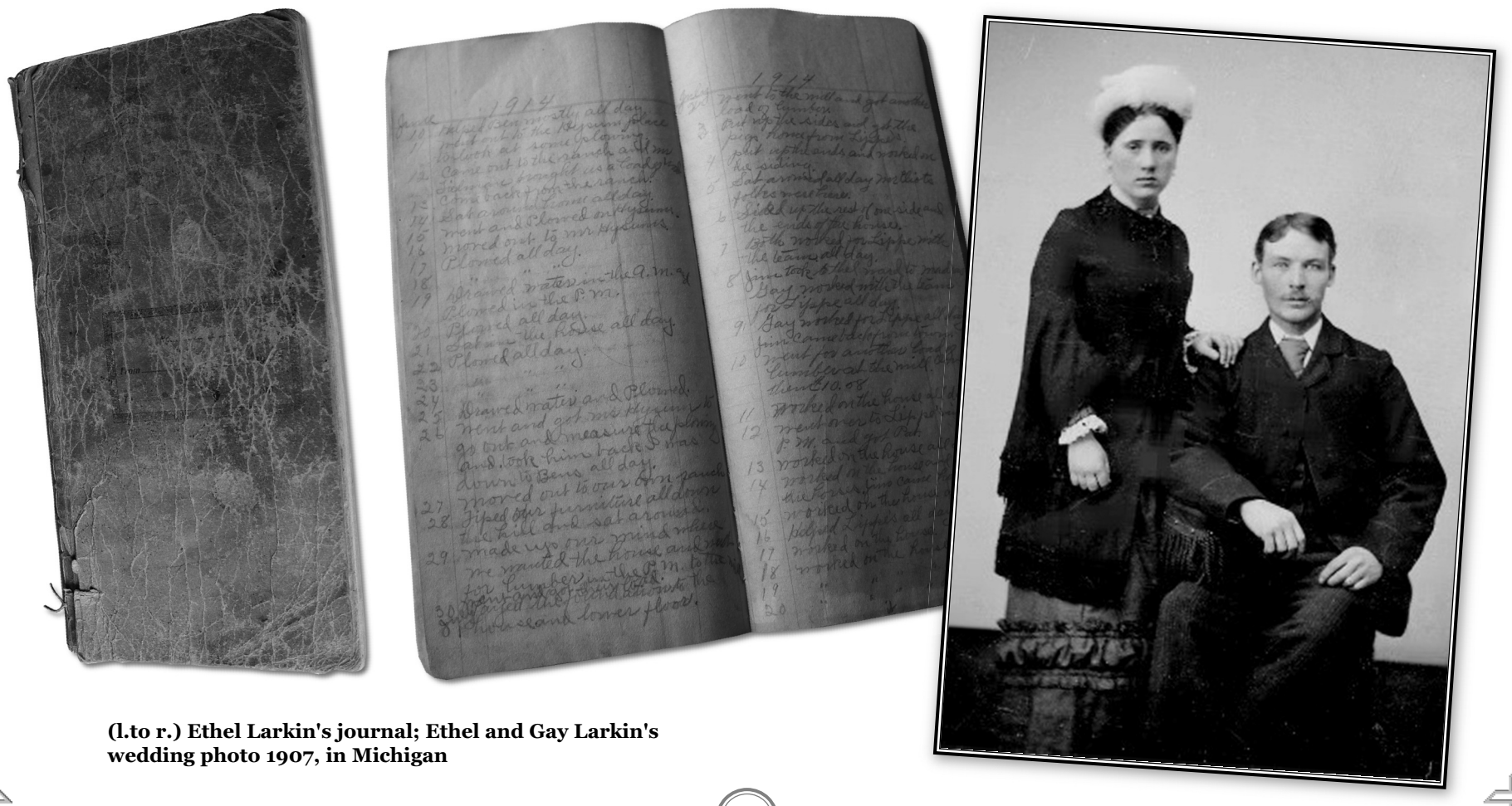
By Jarold Ramsey

The beginning of the end of this story came in the early 1970s, when a young man named Rick Donahoe was tearing down an old outbuilding on his farm north of Redmond, Oregon. In one of the walls, he found a tattered ledger-book, its pages filled with daily entries in pencil, dating from January 1912 to September 1917, beginning in central Michigan (Saginaw County) and abruptly breaking off somewhere east of Madras, Jefferson County, Oregon.

It didn't seem to be a proper diary—more, he thought, a kind of "day book" or journal keeping careful track of work, visits, income and expenses for a family, with very little of a personal nature registered. It was definitely not a self-conscious "literary" record. But who kept it? There was no name, but clearly the writer was part of a farming family, first in Michigan, and after the move to Oregon, they were homesteaders, struggling to prove up on and gain title to the 160 acres they'd claimed. But where? Was the writer a man or a woman? (How the book ended up in a shed many miles from its place of origin was, and remains, part of its mystery.)

Rick Donahoe was fascinated by the ledger-book and the story it might tell, if he could identify the writer, and locate the homestead. He carefully transcribed it in typescript, and even drew up an alphabetized index of names of people mentioned in the entries. Eventually, he and his wife Mary sold their farm and re-settled in Ohio, and in 2010 he contacted me, wondering if the Jefferson County Historical Society would give the "mystery ledger" a home in our archives—and if I personally would like to take a crack at solving its puzzles.

It's pleasant to share an obsessive interest in something that seems important, and inscrutable. So it's been great fun sharing the ledger and its challenges with Rick Donahoe—and what over several years of research has come to light about its historical significance, and the identity of its author and her family owes a great deal to him. He was the finder of it, after all, and more crucially, its first keeper: it was his shrewd recognition of its potential value as a document that led him to save and transcribe it. It's a cautionary exercise to reflect on how many similar tattered records of our Central Oregon past have been accidentally



(l.to r.) Ethel Larkin's journal; Ethel and Gay Larkin's wedding photo 1907, in Michigan

found, idly leafed through—and thrown away. This one, at least, has found an archival home, for future readers to study.

When I had received the journal from Rick Donahoe along with his typed transcript of it and index of names mentioned in the second "Oregon" half of the record, I immediately looked over the index, thinking that some of the names would likely be those of neighbors of the homesteaders, wherever they located. Sure enough, there seemed to be a pattern of references to early-day settlers known to be out in the country east of Hay Creek Ranch, between there and Blizzard Ridge—the Lippes, the Kibbees, Tom Power, Bruce Shawe, Ed Allen, and others. Other names tallied with people known to be living in and around Madras 1913-1917.

One of these, frequently mentioned at the beginning, was just named "Ben." By this time I had noticed, on a short list at the back of the journal, the names Gay Larkin and Ethel Larkin. Could Ben, I wondered, be Ben Larkin, a pioneer Madras harness and saddle dealer, and if so, were Gay and Ethel Larkin our mystery homesteaders, perhaps drawn out to Central Oregon by their relative's presence as a local businessman? So, juggling hunches, I turned to the internet, specifically to Ancestry.com, and entered "Larkin, Gay" for the 1910 census in Saginaw County, Michigan.

Bingo: Gay (born in 1877) and Ethel (born in 1888) Larkin, husband and wife, were living then in the township of Albee, and had a daughter, Mildred. Next I accessed the 1920 census for Jefferson County, Oregon—bingo again: the Larkins were now living on a farm near Hay Creek Ranch, and by now had five children. Knowing that Ben Larkin had come to Madras about 1906, I next checked him out in the 1910 census for Oregon, and confirmed my hunch that he was Gay's brother, two years his senior.

Now it remained to identify the keeper of the journal, and to locate the Larkin homestead. The entries made it clear that Gay came out from Michigan in September 1913, presumably to look for a homestead site and file a claim on it; and that Ethel and Mildred and their other children came out (by train) in mid-winter of 1914. From this, it was an easy step to deduce that Ethel was in fact the keeper of the family record—in Michigan, she records Gay's departure for Oregon, covers the family's doings for the next five months (including a farm and household sale, and farewell visits with their family and friends), and then in her characteristically dry language apologizes for writing no entries for a month—"Lost all time having sale and visiting, and moving on a tedious journey. Arrived in Madras Feb. 1, at 6 am."

"Lost all time having sale and visiting, and moving on a tedious journey. Arrived in Madras Feb. 1, at 6 am."

Entries in March 1914 mentioning that the Larkins were "going out to the ranch" (evidently they were staying in Madras, perhaps with Ben) indicate that Gay had in fact filed on a homestead after he arrived the previous September. So the next step toward locating the place was to consult Madras Land Office records (in the Jefferson County Historical Society Archives) for homestead filings in the last months of 1913. Sure enough: on Sept. 16, 1913, Gay C. Larkin filed on 160 acres legally described as "the East ½ of the NE ¼ and the North ½ of the SE ½ of Section 17, Township 11 South." By transferring these coordinates to a sectional map of Jefferson County (then part of Crook), it was easy to identify where the Larkins had "located": about 15 miles east of Madras, off the road to Ashwood (then still under construction) and up Little Willow Creek south and east and about a half-mile up the draw of one its tributaries, known locally as "Jim Creek," in honor of three bachelor settlers named Jim. Later, in 1914, they filed what was known as an "additional" claim of 40 acres, on the southeast side of the property.

Looked at today, a century later, the place (now part of Hay Creek Ranch) reveals virtually no signs of the Larkins' industrious occupation—no buildings or corrals, no domestic trees, very little in the way of scrap wood and metal, only a few faint traces of roads. But as homesteading sites go in this upland range country, it has its merits. There is a spring (with remnants of a spring box and a pipe) above the little knoll at the bottom of the draw where the house was apparently located, with open ground on either side of the draw for small fields and pasture. The main acreage for crops lies along the top of the ridge above and south of the draw, paralleling it—"up on the hill," as

Ethel called it. The impression is of a rather sheltered farmstead, without being unduly confined or closed in.

It also seems now like a very lonesome place—but of course at the time the Larkins took it up, at the very peak of the local homesteading boom, they would have had neighbors on every side, most of them no more than a mile or two away, though they would not have been able to see each other's kerosene lamps at night, given the terrain.. Such were the rigors of homesteading out here, especially during the years of the Great Drought, that "the neighborhood" was nearly empty by 1930.

So far we've gotten Gay and Ethel Larkin identified and landed on their claim—but of course these answers, though important, lead us on to further questions equally important for understanding them as Central Oregon homesteaders and Ethel's journal as a unique source document. How did they live in Michigan, and why did they leave there in 1913-1914, and attempt to take up free land in Oregon? What was the "economy" of their lives in both places, and what continuities and discontinuities were there between the one and the other? And two over-arching questions, in equal measure difficult to answer, and impossible to ignore: who were they, these intrepid young people; and in their lives and doings in Oregon were they in historically useful ways representative Central Oregon settlers of their time?

The farm they left behind in Michigan was located southwest of Saginaw. Gay's father, Almon Wakefield Larkin, had settled in the area in the previous generation, and it's unknown whether Gay owned his own farm or rented it. In Ethel's daily record, we learn that they raised corn, oats, potatoes, beans, and hay, marketing the latter two crops when they had a surplus. Their land apparently had some hardwood timber on it, maple and hickory, and they regularly cut and sold "hub poles" (apparently blanks for making wagon-wheel hubs), "hickory butts" (?), "traverse poles" (?), and "bolts and spiles" (?). In early spring they tapped maple trees for syrup.

And they kept livestock: milk cows, chickens, pigs, and what seems to have been a sizeable string of workhorses, enabling them to work their own land, and do extensive "custom" farming for neighbors. In addition to all this, they both worked intermittently as farriers, shoeing horses, "floating" (filing) their teeth, and so on; and also at need they repaired watches and clocks! The impression is that they were both very industrious—but Ethel's Michigan entries make it clear that they were not thriving financially, in fact struggling to keep up with various loans and "notes" they'd taken on to keep operating.

Underlying their struggles in Michigan, and almost certainly prompting their departure, was the unfavorable situation of their farm—in a low, marshy region, where several rivers and creeks converge and flow into the Flint River, which runs into Lake Michigan. Chief of these streams is the Shiabawasee River. Whether their farmstead adjoined it or one of the others, Ethel's journal graphically records no less than six flood episodes between March 1912 and March 1913—twice flooding the first floor of their house, immersing a cow in the barn, and drowning a pig. She wryly notes that in the flood of May 1912, "we caught 4 fish in our field." Whether they actually lost crops to the overflowing water is not clear—certainly so much moisture on their lands couldn't have been beneficial. But one frequent item on her record of household expenses, quinine, suggests that living in such a damp, flood-plagued locale was downright unhealthy. Quinine in those days was the universal medicine for malaria, or "fever and ague," and people in mosquito-infested lowlands often took it as a preventive agent. The journal doesn't mention malaria, but the risk of catching it must have been a worry.

It's typical of Ethel's way of recording their daily lives that she offers no commentary on what must have been their growing dissatisfaction with trying to farm in Albee Township, and likewise no reflections on their momentous decision sometime in 1913 to pick up stakes and move to Oregon, no doubt with the encouragement of Gay's brother Ben in Madras. At the very least, he could have assured them that their homestead out there would not be subject to endless flooding!

Although the Larkins were ready to leave Michigan for a new life in the West, Ethel dutifully spent much of her final weeks visiting relatives on both sides of their marriage, saying goodbye to people she would very likely never see again: Gay's parents, hers (the Newmans), her grandparents, favorite cousins, and so on, in what seems to have been a close extended family. When she finally boarded the train (probably in Saginaw), she was traveling with son John (3), infant daughter Lilia, and stepdaughter Mildred (10), Gay's daughter by his first wife Lillie Eisenhauer--that marriage had ended in divorce in 1906, and Lillie died later that year. Gay and Ethel's first-born, Wilfred, had died in infancy in 1908.

She may have had another traveling companion besides the children. In early summer 1912 she indicates that someone named "Jim" was working for them regularly, and within a few days after her arrival in Madras, she notes that "Jim" and Gay were helping Ben Larkin in his shop. When they took up their homestead below Blizzard Ridge, he was clearly a crucial member of their team. But who was he? The identity of "Jim" remains one of the journal's mysteries—but a plausible guess is that he was James Kentner, a young neighbor in Albee Township, mentioned in the journal as a visitor, and then, soon after the visit, the regular presence of "Jim" begins. He seems not to have been a relative. Between the Larkins in ages (he would have been about 29 in 1914), Kentner was married to a woman named Mildred, confusingly the same as Gay's daughter. Whether Mildred Kentner came out on the train with the others is unknown, as is their place of residence in Oregon, whether with the Larkins at their farmstead, or elsewhere. Most of the journal's references to "Mildred" are clearly to young Mildred Larkin, but some appear to point to an adult—that is, to Jim Kentner's wife.

Twice, later in the journal, Ethel takes Jim on a homestead-finding tour, looking for a place

of his own. There are frequent references to his being sick, and if "Jim" really was James Kentner, our last possible glimpse of him beyond the journal is sad—the 1920 census locates "Kentner, James" as a patient in the State Hospital in Pendleton, which in those days housed TB patients—and the insane.

Whoever he was, and whatever his end, Jim figures in the journal as an essential participant in the day-by-day work of the Larkins' homesteading operation, even to the point of helping Ethel on occasion with the washing. There is one reference to "Jim's wages," but it's not clear that he was on a regular salary: my guess is that he was in some sense a kind of working partner in the Larkins' venture, sharing in the work (including outside jobs they took on) and in the profits (when there were any), and looking meanwhile to find a homestead of his own. Such arrangements, as loose and casual as they may seem, were not uncommon in homesteading days. Very few "entrymen" could afford a regular hired man per se—but a cousin or younger brother or brother-in-law might help out at the outset of "proving up." What's unusual about Jim is that he was not a relative.

After writing on March 18, 1914, "Got the tent," a few days later Ethel reports that "Gay and I went out there and stayed out there all night." Soon they were plowing and seeding barley, oats, and wheat on the new land. On May 29, she reports the following: "Stayed home and took care of me all day. The baby was born in the evening." (This was Gladys.) But within a few days, she was back at work, fixing up a well for Mrs. Percival in Madras, and helping in Ben's shop. It was the same with her next baby, William, born July 23, 1916, which happened to be a Sunday. "Sat around and slept all day. A baby boy came at 1 minute after 12 a.m." Soon she was back at work.

And so it went day by day on the Larkin farm—Gay, Ethel, Jim, all working, whether on the farmstead or "for hire" to their neighbors, or in Ben's shop—apparently Ethel was able to manage their teams of horses and mules as well as the menfolk, and did so at need, with stepdaughter Mildred minding the household and the children, John, Lilia, and baby Gladys. Looking at the details of the Larkins' work overall, two clear impressions emerge. First, they worked even harder on their Oregon homestead than they did in Michigan, taking only Sundays off (but not, apparently, for church). And second, they were attempting to maintain a very strenuous balance between laboring on their own place on the one hand, with an anxious eye on making it begin to pay as soon as possible, and "proving up" on it to gain title, and on the other hand "working out" for hire, whether with their teams on other farms, or doing various physical jobs. The outside work carried the advantage of immediate payment, which in their early years at least was essential for paying the bills and supporting the ongoing homesteading project.

A rough tally of days spent by the three of them working on the home place as against working out totals 513 days working at home compared to 323 working for hire. That seems about right, for homesteaders with their limited resources. Other settlers didn't have to work out; some in fact had "day jobs" in Madras and relied on strivers like the Larkins to do most of their farm work for them. The point is that, at least in this time and place, there was plenty of work to be done, and impecunious and industrious settlers like Gay, Ethel, and Jim were willing and able to do it—as long as it didn't undercut their own homesteading—and as long as they could stand up to it physically. Given the work record in the journal, it's a wonder that they did.

A rough tally of days spent by the three of them working on the home place as against working out totals 513 days working at home compared to 323 working for hire.

By late June 1914, with barley, wheat, oats, corn, and potatoes planted, and a vegetable garden started, they were ready to establish themselves permanently on the place and build their house. The sequence of Ethel's entries at this time is worth following in full:

June 27: Moved out to our own ranch.

June 28: (Sunday): Tipped (?) our furniture all down the hill and sat around.

June 29: Made up our minds where we wanted the house and went for lumber in the afternoon. [probably to Grizzly]

July 1: Layed the foundations to the house and lower floor.

July 2: Went to the mill and got another load of lumber.

July 3: Put up the sides and got the pigs home from Lippes.

July 4: Put up the ends and worked on the siding.

July 6 was a Sunday ("Sat around all day," no doubt impatiently!), and then they resumed working out for a few days, before returning to the house-in-progress on July 10: "Went for another load of lumber at the mill. Owe them $10.58." From here on the house occupied them full time until July 20: "Worked on the house and moved into it." –No use wishing that Ethel had verbalized what they must have felt about their achievement—out of the tent and into their own house, in less than a month!—but it is easy to imagine what her bare words imply.

From here, the Larkins and Jim resumed their alternation of home work and hiring out—harvesting their first crop of wheat ("1785 lbs."), hauling rocks off their fields, preparing for the next year's crops—and going forth with the teams to plow, disk, and harrow ground for neighbors, including at length "Mr. Cook," (probably Riley Cook, Principal of the Madras

School, who had taken up a homestead). And Gay and Ethel also on occasion carried on with the odd jobs they took on back in Michigan—doing farrier work, fixing time-pieces, cutting and selling wood for fence-posts and firewood. Gay also seems to have been a horse-trader of sorts, buying and selling when he could.

Frequently, in fact weekly during the summers, they hauled water for themselves and (for pay) for neighbors. Given the spring on their place, this seems odd, but probably their growing collection of livestock consumed more water, at least in the hot months, than the spring provided. In addition, they both undertook to hire on as "locaters" for homestead seekers. This was an officially important and also a notorious job—all too often, unscrupulous locaters would take unwary would-be settlers in hand, show them properties already filed on or otherwise unavailable, pocket the $9 fee, and leave them to discover at the nearest Land Office that the place of their dreams was not to be had. (Ethel, in fact, twice took Jim on locating excursions, but only charged him $4.50 for each search. Apparently, he didn't find what he was looking for.)

The Larkins' main field, looking east.

With the outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914, there was a nation-wide campaign to obtain horses for the Allied forces and also for the U.S. Army. So Gay tried (unsuccessfully) to deal several of their older workhorses to "the Artillery" as Ethel calls it; and later, in 1916-1917, he actively scoured the countryside for scrap metal to sell to the Government for the war effort. His most ambitious outside job during the period of the journal seems to have been a month of work, in July 1917, presumably with a team pulling some sort of "fresno" style excavator, on what became the Brewer Reservoir south of Hay Creek Ranch headquarters. The Reservoir impounded water for irrigation of fields around the ranch, and it is still in use today, along with the Little Willow Creek Reservoir (built during WWII), just off the Ashwood Road and only a mile or so northwest of the Larkins' place. Gay's absence from the farm during the very busy month of July must have caused problems. Ethel notes more than once that Gay was "still not back home," and finally, when Jim had one of his sick episodes, she went after him.

In large part because of their outside work, the Larkins were "on the road" a lot (or what passed for roads back then), including frequent trips to Madras, Culver, Ashwood, Grizzly, and so on. Roundtrip to Madras would have been about 30 miles, but they went often, usually for half a day, including business there. How were they able to cover the ground so quickly? There is no evidence in the journal that they owned a car, and there is no mention even of a buggy—so perhaps they had good fast horses, and of course in those days before extensive fencing they could probably go by the shortest routes. Still, their speedy travel seems remarkable.

The farm-work vocabulary that the Larkins brought with them from Michigan is amusingly different from its Oregon equivalent. "Floating" horses' teeth meant filing them even, to fit the bridle bits; "tapping" horses meant horse-shoeing. "Dragging" a field (they did a lot of it) apparently meant harrowing it to break up clods, which on the Larkins' black, "dobey" upland soil could become massive, and an obstacle to cultivation. "Rolling" and "pulverizing" probably meant the same, only using some sort of rolling device. They "drawed hay all day," apparently hauling it and stacking it. When they went wood-cutting, they would get a "jag" of wood—what quantity this was is unknown. One wonders how often the Larkins, initially using such "foreign" terms, had problems doing the right job for their neighbors!

Fortunately for young Mildred Larkin (and later her younger siblings), a one-room school,

"Fairview," opened the year they arrived on the ranch, 1914. It was located only about a mile away, over two small draws and ridges, southeast of their place, on land donated by one of their near neighbors, Tom Power, who had found his way to Central Oregon in 1910 from Newfoundland by way of Nevada and Alaska, and would eventually serve as Judge of Jefferson County through WWII and on into the 1950s. The teacher at Fairview was a young man, Bruce Shawe, who had his own homestead northeast of Hay Creek headquarters; he was a younger brother of another settler, Victor Shawe, also a homesteading teacher, who for a time served as Superintendent of Crook County Schools and later became a popular writer of short stories in *The Saturday Evening Post*, many of them set in the range country between Grizzly Mountain and Ashwood. The Larkins worked frequently for both Tom Power and Bruce Shawe, "the teacher."

The Larkins' spring and house sites, looking west.

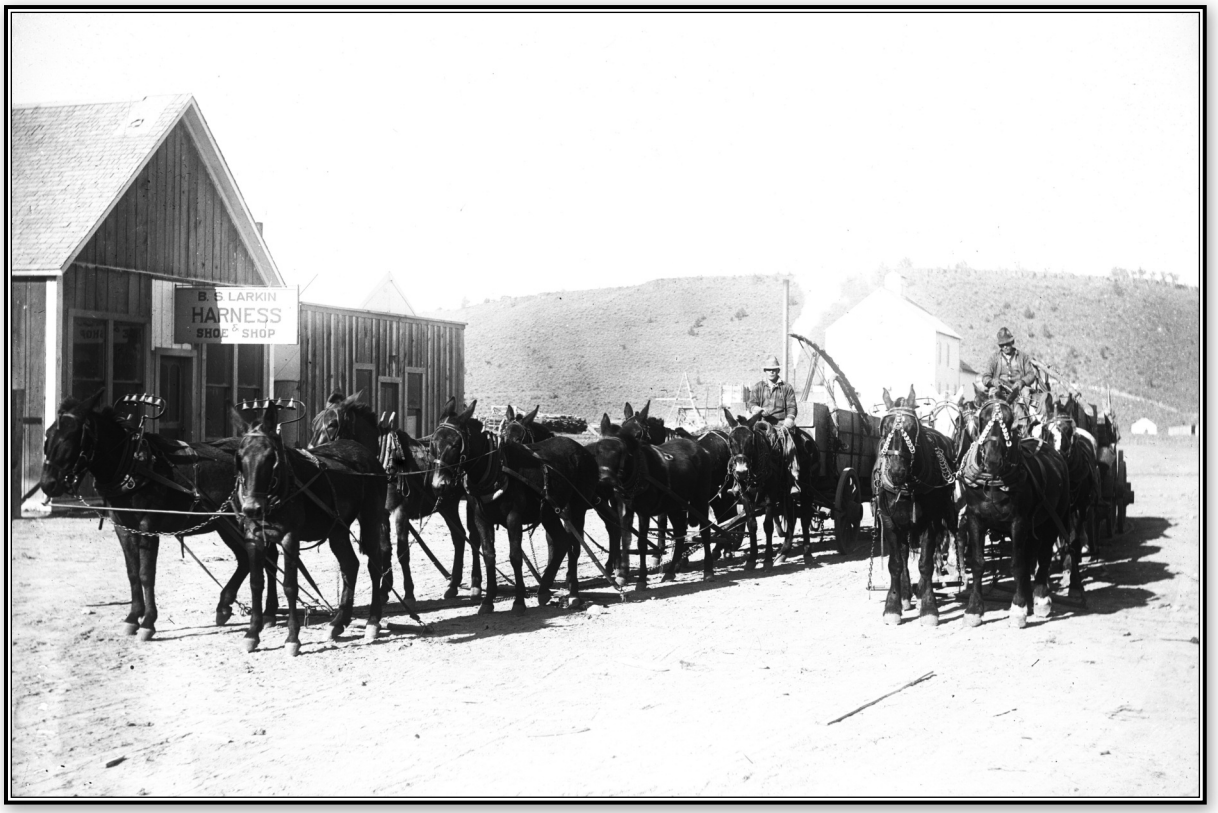
Fairview School regularly had up to twenty scholars, including children of families who were (judging from the journal) friendly neighbors of the Larkins—the Lippes, the Kibbees, the Garretts. The Lippes and the Kibbees had daughters about Mildred's age, and Ethel notes frequent visits to and from their places, including some sleep-overs. She also mentions attending "meetings at the school," and at Christmas 1914, going to school "for the Christmas tree."

The outing at Christmas was rare for the Larkin family, it seems; about the only other serious social occasion mentioned is their going to "the rabbit drive" earlier that month (the mass killing of jackrabbits was a popular homesteading community event, usually followed by a potluck meal). On the 4th of July 1917, Mildred, now 14, "went to the picnic." This was almost certainly that year's version of the famous 4th-of-July celebrations at the Elkins place, a well-established ranch south of Hay Creek Ranch above Awbrey Creek, which usually ran for two days, and included informal rodeos, a baseball tournament featuring local town teams, and ice cream, and usually drew over one hundred guests, many of whom camped out on the place. Evidently Mildred's parents were too busy to go, and no doubt they also missed a 1916 4th of July celebration promoted by another neighbor, by the name of Brewer, somehow staged on the summit of craggy Big Sheep Rock, visible on the skyline southeast of their place.

All in all, the Larkins were in the midst of a lively, sociable community of settlers; and even if they didn't gad about much socially and tended pretty strictly to business, they must have been sustained by the presence of such a neighborhood. As the years of her journal went by, Ethel recorded more and more frequent visits at their farm, sometimes even overnight, from the folks around. Once or twice they even played cards.

What about the folks back in Michigan, including their parents and siblings? On that topic the journal poses two minor mysteries.

One involves the arrival of someone identified as "Pa," on Oct. 18, 1916. Almost certainly this is Ethel's father, Charles Newman, whom she regularly calls "Pa" in the Michigan portion of the journal. His wife, Ethel's mother Emily, may or may not have been living at this time; if she had died, it wouldn't be surprising that he would come out for a visit. A complicating detail, however, is a January 1915 reference to Gay and Ethel going over to Hay Creek to "fix up Pa's guardian letter." This might suggest that he was somehow incapacitated mentally or physically—but after his arrival in Oregon he was clearly able to busy himself usefully at the homestead, making a churn dasher for Ethel and a chair for the baby, William; and later, in 1917, he moved into a place of his own, evidently somewhere nearby. There is no record of his filing an actual homestead claim or buying a "relinquishment," however, and whether he stayed on in Oregon past 1917, or moved back to Michigan, is unknown, with no clear 1920 census records or death records for him in either state.



Harness shop on D St. in Madras of Gay's older brother Ben Larkin, about 1909.

The other mystery came on Sunday, May 13, 1917. Ethel's terse entry reads: "Ben came and got Gay toward night—going for Michigan." No reason given, and all we can tell about the brothers' sudden departure is that Gay did not return for nearly a month, reappearing on the night of June 8, when Ethel met him at Madras. One can only guess here, but the fact that both brothers made the trip may indicate some sort of Larkin family crisis, and the fact that their mother, Cora Goff Larkin, died on October 17 of that same year maybe suggests that her sons traveled all the way back to Albee Township because her death was thought to be imminent as early as May. Her death certificate indicates "paralysis," so perhaps she had suffered a major stroke back in May.

With her husband's return, Ethel's journal-keeping continues imperturbably, with the usual work detail: "June 11: Plowed all day and Pa fixed fence and Jim worked for Mr. Thomas"—with no further reference to the mysterious train trip. It must have seriously unbalanced their finances, but by the last entries in the journal, at the end of September, 1917, with Gay out threshing wheat and Jim sowing rye and Ethel picking fruit somewhere ("for pay"), the impression is strong that they were back on track, forging ahead, doing reasonably well. That impression tallies with an auspicious entry for early that year, Jan. 31-Feb. 1. Jan. 31: "Went to The Dalles . Spent $4.50 for socks and rubbers and things that were needed. Then took the train to The Dalles. $7.20 fare. Feb. 1: Filed on our land. Cost $.55 for breakfast, $56 filing fees, $.75 for dinner, and $1 in trade on watches. $7.25 coming home, $.10 for candy."

Clearly, as indicated by the train fare, Ethel went on this crucial trip by herself. What it signifies is that their efforts at earning "free" land by homesteading were about to be officially rewarded. Under new regulations enacted in 1912, the year before Gay filed on the place, the minimum time required for "proving up" had been reduced from five years, to three, and no doubt the Larkins worked even harder to be ready to file for "final proof" in 1917. The procedure involved submitting an application with affidavits, an on-site inspection, and five consecutive publications in a local newspaper of their filing to be granted "patent," or title to their acres. The Larkins' notice probably ran for five weeks in the *Madras Pioneer* or maybe one of the Prineville papers later in 1917. (During the local homesteading boom years, improbable newspapers like the *Antelope Herald*, the *Ashwood Prospector*, and the *Mitchell Monitor and Sentinel* sprang up and published for a few years, in part, it appears, to take advantage of fees from this "publication" requirement.)

Presumably the Larkins finally received their homestead title, signed by President Woodrow Wilson, in later 1917 or early 1918, in the mail that came for them at Hay Creek. But by then Ethel's 1912-1917 journal had ended.

What happened to them thereafter is all too briefly narrated (because of lack of records). One hopes that having reached the major goal of attaining title to their land, they continued to do well on the place and at their jobs, despite the onset of the Great Central Oregon Drought after about 1920.Their family increased at regular intervals, with the addition of Lewis in 1917, Alta in 1921, Selma in 1925, and Minerva in 1929.

In 1923, they took a momentous step, one that seems to be consistent with their ambitions and not driven by desperation. They sold the homestead under Blizzard Ridge to Hay Creek Ranch "for $10 and other good and valuable considerations" –the full amount of the sale seems to be encoded in the standard phrase "other good and valuable considerations" as entered in the Hay Creek records; but it was assuredly more than enough to allow them to buy a ranch in Crook County north of Prineville in what was becoming the Ochoco irrigated farming district along McKay Creek. And there, sadly, Gay Larkin died suddenly on October 19, 1932, age 55.

Ethel tried to keep her large family on the farm for a year or two, but then moved to Prineville to find work. On the occasion of her 86th birthday in 1974, the Prineville *Central Oregonian* described her as "sharp of mind and with a twinkle in her eye," and noted that she had raised five daughters and three sons, resulting in 39 grandchildren and 76 great-grandchildren! She also noted with pride that when she and Gay first came out from Michigan, they landed in Crook County—but "we helped with our votes the next fall to divide the county in three parts—Jefferson, Deschutes, and Crook." (Actually Deschutes did not get itself separated county-wise until 1916.)

She died in 1977, and is buried with Gay in Prineville's Juniper Haven Cemetery. As far as I know, their children are all deceased, and the subsequent generations of Larkins appear to have left Central Oregon, a number of them settling in Grant County—but I have not been able to contact them about Gay and Ethel's homesteading legacy and the contents of her journal.

What can we make of that legacy, as uniquely documented in the journal? As it happens, the years around the Larkins' arrival in Central Oregon were the peak years in U.S. homesteading history, with 59,363 claims granted nationally in 1913, and 53, 308 in 1914. In the country where they settled, the boom ran from about 1909 to the end of WWI, encouraged by the arrival of the railroads in 1911 and by the sometimes overblown commercial appeals to would-be settlers made by the Oregon Trunk (Great Northern) and Deschutes (Union Pacific) lines. In point of historical fact, the middle of Oregon from north to south was the last major homesteading area in the U.S.—two decades and more after William Jackson Turner and other demographic historians had declared that the American Frontier was closed—no more free land after about 1890, it was claimed. This is one reason among others why "the Larkin legacy" is so important—here's where, with people like them, a formative impulse in American history finally played out.

"the Larkin legacy" is so important—here's where, with people like them, a formative impulse in American history finally played out.

Here in the Oregon interior, as elsewhere along the march of homesteading in the West, our "entrymen" and "entrywomen" forebears have certainly not been forgotten. Much has been written on the subject, including numerous memoirs, mainly by the children and grandchildren of the settlers, much less commonly by the settlers themselves, and almost never on a day-by-day journal or diary basis. Inevitably, colored by family pride, nostalgia, and highly selective hindsight, many of these accounts tend to romanticize the homesteading experience, emphasizing the industrious and resourceful virtues of the families involved, and the heroic mix of privations and elemental satisfactions and freedoms that they took equally in stride. "O Pioneers"—it is a collective regional narrative that parallels and in some respects completes the Oregon Trail story, as part of our Western American mythos.

There is also, however, another very different perspective on homesteaders and their lives, here in Oregon and elsewhere. It has been promoted by recent "revisionist" historians and earlier, by writers of realistic fiction, notably by Oregon's only Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, H.L. Davis. Davis grew up in and around The Dalles, and as a teenager lived in Antelope and worked for the *Antelope Herald* as a typesetter. This was around 1907, and what he saw of loose caravans of would-be settlers straggling through Antelope and Shaniko into Central Oregon seems to have been the inspiration of a thoroughly negative, often contemptuous view of homesteaders in general. In his Pulitzer novel, Honey in the Horn, and in several of his essays, Davis depicts them as mostly improvident and feckless losers and tumbleweeds, incapable of making their hard work (when they did it) pay off in anything lasting. Denying the official premise of "proving up" by improving one's land—"A country didn't increase in value according to what you put into it," he once wrote-- Davis more than once compared the homesteaders he encountered to the packrats that infested their abandoned shacks. "If there is a monument to busted homesteaders, the packrat deserves to be it. He is by nature one victim of the homesteaders' never-failing curse—a fury for beginning things and leaving them one-fourth done. It may have been from them that he learned his habits . . . "

This facet of Davis's depiction of the interior Northwest he grew up in has never to my

knowledge been challenged, no doubt as a consequence of his stature as a writer, and it has had considerable influence. Probably, on this and other subjects, he was encouraged by his literary editor and mentor, the great iconoclast H.L. Mencken, to cultivate his own native cynical and pessimistic outlook. And maybe some of the settlers he watched as a boy drifting through Wasco and Sherman counties were a shiftless, aimless bunch, or at least seemed so to a precocious youngster: more contemptible than pitiable, the Menckenian opposite of empire-builders. But others passing through then and there and later clearly did know where they were going, and what had to be done to claim their lands, and did it, many of them, with lasting consequences; and of these the Larkins offer us a valuable example, and a compelling basis for correcting H.L. Davis's ungenerous stereotypes.

Likewise (and on the other hand) the Larkins' record gives us a salient way to "adjust" the fond and often romanticized portraits of the Central Oregon homesteading experience given in many memoirs. Unmistakably, the Larkins, and their helper Jim, and no doubt later their children worked terribly hard, both on their own place and for others; and their lives as jotted down in Ethel's daily notes might seem unrelievedly bleak. Reading her spare account of what they did, physically, day by day, week after week, is daunting—a kind of vicarious ordeal in fact, for anyone familiar with old-time farm labor. How did they keep it up? Were they sometimes worn out, fed up, bored, hopeless, ready to quit? They must have had such dark moments, as well as intervals of satisfaction, even joy. But Ethel, judging from her journal-keeping style and the labors it records seems to have been a remarkably focused individual, and likewise her partner, Gay; and if there are no frivolous, light-hearted entries or dejected asides or introspective digressions, occasionally one finds passages that, even in their flat language, hint at the emotional life, the downs and the ups, that they no doubt had in common with their neighbors out on the land. On May 23, 1915, she wrote: "Sat around all day and listened

Ethel Larkin in her 80's.

to it rain." But earlier, on June 27, 1914, she had written, "Moved out to our own ranch." And on July 20 of that year: "worked on the house and moved into it."

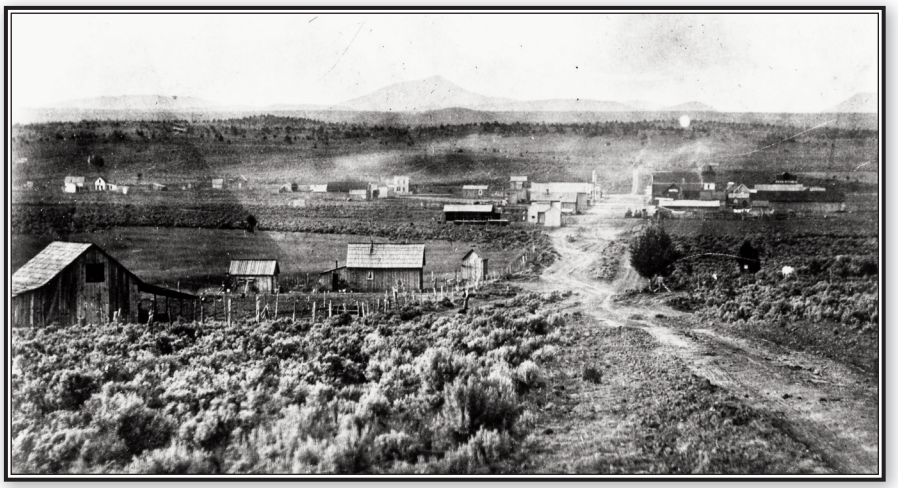
At such moments as these, we probably can't help wishing as Ethel's unknown and accidental readers that she had risen to the occasion a little, not just registering what had happened, but expressing in heightened language how she felt about it, what it meant to her. But that's a wish that's irrelevant to the document that she has left behind. In her very limited free time over six years, in Michigan and then in Oregon, she faithfully kept a daily record that basically says, on every page, "This is what we did."

Working on the Larkin journal, trying to imagine the living details it registers from a century ago, I have thought often of the homesteading tradition in my father's family (which by the way did not produce a diary or a journal). In important ways the Ramseys' experience as settlers here was very different from the Larkins'. They came out from northern Missouri, a decade earlier than the Larkins, in 1902 (by train to The Dalles, and then by wagons through Antelope to Madras); and as avowed "dirt farmers" they were able to find better land, on the west side of Agency Plains, and more of it. They also came with more capital, and with the considerable advantage of being a large, extended family—grown and half-grown sons and married daughters, an uncle or two, even my grandfather Billy's elderly father John, who came out and stayed just long enough to prove up on his adjoining claim and then deed it to his son. They didn't hire out.

So, clearly, as settlers here the Ramseys were better set up from the start than the Larkins, and as they would say they were able to "stick" to their original land and sometimes even prospered over four generations. But at heart they were, I think, much like the Larkins: incorrigibly hard-working and frugal to a fault, stubborn as all get-out, ambitious in practical ways, neighborly, but abstinent when it came to the pursuit of pleasure. I doubt that they were acquainted with Gay and Ethel out below Blizzard Ridge (although the Ramseys were early customers of Gay's brother Ben, the Madras harness-dealer, and a 1920 "B.N. Larkin Harness and Saddles" calendar hung over my father's desk for many years); but I'd like to think that they would have understood and approved of each other, as dedicated homesteaders trying to make new homes in a hard land.

"Ways Into and Out of Madras: A Twisty Tale"

by Jane Ahern



Entering Madras from the north in 1905

After enduring a long summer and fall of traffic disruption at Madras' south end, it's safe to say that we've all had enough of road construction. It is easy to take for granted the two major arteries that pass through Madras these days—Highway 97, also known as The Dalles-California Highway and Highway 26—that allow us to zip over to Bend or even Portland for the day and still be home for supper, but when Madras was platted in 1902 roads were primitive in some places and non-existent in most and road construction was extremely desirable.

One only has to look at a 1905 photograph of Madras to understand how isolated it was. The photo shows the road coming down the hill from the north, really just a wagon road that looks like it was worn rather than built. In photos from subsequent years, the road through town looks somewhat improved, but still must have been dusty in the summer, muddy in the winter and exhausting to traverse for any serious distance.

Transportation to and from Madras improved enormously after 1911, when two railroads were built from the Columbia River to Bend, but the roads were still not adequate. It turns out that Jefferson County was far from unique in its lack of good roads.

According to a fascinating publication entitled *Casual and Factual Glimpses at the Beginning and Development of Oregon's Roads and Highways* published by the State Highway Commission (frustratingly undated, but containing statistics up to, but not beyond, 1950), when the first State Highway Commission was formed in 1917, there were virtually no paved roads in Oregon outside of Multnomah County. The newly created Columbia Highway was just a dirt road between Hood River and Astoria and the Pacific Highway, along with all the roads to the coast, became impassible once the winter rains began.

The new Highway Commission was charged with constructing a system of trunk highways linking all parts of the state together and The Dalles-California Highway through the center of the state was on its list. The highway required a full 10 years to complete, but that's not so unimpressive considering that during those 10 years the commission was simultaneously building or improving highways all over Oregon.

Whereas the railroads were built in the course of two raucous years, with much fanfare from the newspapers and significant impact on the small towns of Central Oregon as they were overwhelmed with the influx of railroad workers, the construction of The Dalles-California Highway was a much quieter affair, spread out over a longer span of time and referenced only occasionally in the Madras Pioneer.

It appears that the state did not begin work on the Jefferson County portion of the highway until 1919. The Pioneer noted in August of that year that highway engineer R.P. Newland had set up an office in the county courthouse so that he could do some preliminary survey work. By November the highway commission was getting ready to take bids for section of highway between Madras and the southern county line.

Interestingly, the Pioneer's November 1919 story mentions that the survey had not yet been made for the road north of Madras because there

If you think this is inconvenient . . .

Imagine if you lived here in 1915.

was a possibility that one of the railroad tracks along the Deschutes River Canyon would be removed, freeing up its road bed for the highway to use.

The previous month, Oct. 1919, the Portland newspaper *Oregon Journal* had called for the tracks to be pulled up and re-used to extend a railroad line from Bend to Burns. "By converting one of the railway lines into a highway, the crime of building two railroads up the canyon will be in a measure atoned," it wrote. This coming from a newspaper that, only a decade earlier, had avidly covered the competition between the two railroads!

The idea sounds like fantasy, but in March 1920, a representative from Redmond got the state legislature to appoint a committee to investigate its feasibility. Alas, neither the Oregon Trunk nor the Deschutes Railroad was ready to abandon its line and the plan was declared dead in June 1920.

Of course, each railroad did eventually take out sections of its tracks. As early as 1923, the Oregon Trunk abandoned its line from Trout Creek to Madras and in 1935 the Deschutes Railroad abandoned the northern portion of its line. But by then it was too late for the railroad beds to be used for the highway.

Instead, the road went north from Madras on what is now Clark Drive, jogged east on what is now Quaale Road and took an even bigger dip to the south than it does now at Lyle Gap. As it does now, the road went through Cow Canyon and crossed the Deschutes River at Maupin.

South of Madras, the route originally included Metolius and Culver, although those towns almost missed their chance. The Feb. 12, 1920 Madras Pioneer reported that landowners near Culver had been holding out for higher prices for their rights-of-way, nearly prompting the State Highway Commission to change the route altogether, but had finally reached an agreement with the commission.

Both towns were eventually bypassed in June of 1946, shaving another mile off the trip to Redmond. Reading the Madras Pioneer from that time period, it is easier to find out who had the flu than to understand how

Bridge at Trail Crossing, 1923. That same year, the Oregon State Highway Commission decided to replace this bridge with the high bridge over the Crooked River Gorge.

residents of Culver and Metolius felt about losing the highway. Of course, said loss was at least somewhat offset by the coming of irrigation just one month earlier.

By February 1921, a portion of the highway near Madras had been completed. It had been a particularly wet winter and the new road, paved with bituminous macadam (similar to what is today called "chip seal") was a considerable improvement over the old roads. The Pioneer reported "While practically every other main of travel has been practically impassible, this piece of road has been a regular boulevard. The principle kick now seems to be that there isn't more of it."

Two months later, the Madras City Council designated April 4 as Clean-up Day in preparation for the anticipated tourists that would be passing through on the new road. By the next summer, the *Pioneer* re-

ported in a brief story entitled "Tourist Traffic is Now Very Heavy" that 250 cars per day were passing through Madras. Many were from out of state and headed for Suttles Lake (as it used to be known) and the Head of the Metolius. By comparison, in 2013, ODOT logged a daily average of 9,700 vehicles heading south out of Madras on Highway 97 just beyond where the road to Prineville splits off.

Farther to the south, The Dalles-California Highway was still using the grade at Trail Crossing to cross the Crooked River Gorge about a mile upstream from the current bridge. In 1922, the State Highway Commission widened and fenced the steep, winding, road down to the low bridge that had been in use since pioneer times. Even with the improvements, it was dangerous and slow going.

Finally, in 1923 the State Highway Commission made the decision to build the high bridge over the gorge a short distance upstream from the railroad bridge built in 1911. The rest of the highway was complete in 1925 and the bridge, the last link, was finished in 1927.

At some point, the historic bridge at Trail Crossing was removed, whether by humans or nature, and private land ownership has rendered the old road unfortunately difficult to access.

Dedication of Mill Creek bridge on Hwy. 26, 1949.

Warm Springs Highway, a.k.a. Highway 26

The Dalles-California Highway was completed in plenty of time for Eleanor Roosevelt and her companion Lorena Hickok to drive over it in 1934 in a Plymouth sport coupe on their way north to Portland. The *Pioneer* reported that a crowd gathered in Madras and the car "slowed up perceptibly when it passed through."

Apparently they did not have time to stop; perhaps this was because the shortcut to Portland had not yet been built and the ladies still had a long trip ahead of them. Jefferson County farmers had the same problem and it affected their livelihood. As noted in a *Madras Pioneer* story on Sept. 4, 1947, local farmers wanted to sell produce at Portland's East Side Farmer's Market, but it was hard to get there because they had to take The Dalles-California Highway north through the still-difficult Cow Canyon and then wind down into and up out of the Deschutes River Canyon at Maupin to connect with the Wapinitia Highway to Portland.

The State Highway Commission was already working on the problem. In 1931, the Legislature had directed the Highway Commission to set up a secondary highway system and to spend approximately $1 million annually from the state highway fund on construction and maintenance of the secondary highways.

With that mandate, the Highway Commission planned for a secondary state highway from Portland to Prineville. Its first milestone was the completion of the Duc-Sa-Hi Bridge over the Deschutes River near Warm Springs, which was dedicated on June 17, 1934.

After that, the state tackled the job of adjusting the route between Warm Springs and Madras. The new route made a bee-line across the plains, skipping both Pelton and Vanora and eventually the Vanora Grade was replaced with the presently used grade.

The town fathers of Madras had a little scare in 1935 when the State Highway Commission considered routing the Warm Springs Highway in such a way that it would fail to connect with 5th Street, which was the main thoroughfare of Madras. Their lobbying was successful, however, and work began on that 7-mile section of the highway in June 1936.

Progress was very slow after that, hindered by the Great Depression and World War II. During the war, it was very difficult to get supplies such as crushed rock and gravel because the military needed them for their own construction projects. Also, the supply of labor was greatly depleted because of the number of men joining the military.

In 1947, the state finished construction of the leg of the highway between Madras and Prineville, which was celebrated on September 11 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Jefferson-Crook County line. Up until that time, the route between the two cities had remained remarkably circuitous considering their long-standing relationship.

If Madras residents were pleased with this new link to Prineville, they were probably even more pleased that the painful paving project through the center of Madras finally came to an end later that month. Initiated by the State Highway Commission to complement the construction of the two highways which now passed through town, the project involved rebuilding the bridge over Willow Creek, widening 5th Street, putting in sidewalks, adding a storm sewer system, moving power and telephone poles to the alleys and installing a new ornamental lighting system.

Work on the highway through the national forest north west of Warm Springs was completed very slowly, but finally, in 1949, the crucial bridge over Mill Creek was dedicated and the road opened. The new road, Highway 26, shaved 30 miles and approximately 90 minutes from the trip to Portland.

Local Roads

While the State Highway Commission proceeded, at a glacial pace, to improve the roads connecting Madras to Portland, The Dalles, Prineville, Bend, and beyond, Jefferson County officials struggled to civilize the roads closer to home.

As Jerry Ramsey notes in his story "Birth of a County" in the Winter 2014 edition of Sageland, the poor conditions of the roads in our corner of what was then Crook County and the perceived indifference of Crook County officials was one of the motivating factors in the formation of Jefferson County.

Once the new county was established in 1914, its officials knew the roads would have to be a priority. Just a few years later, as a sitting County Commissioner running for County Judge in May 1920, Martin Tellefson published in the *Pioneer* a letter to constituents acknowledging the importance of the roads. In it, he gives a useful explanation of how the roads were administered.

The county was divided into 13 road districts, Tellefson said, which were subject to taxation. Of the taxes collected from each district, 70 percent went towards maintaining the roads in the district and 30 percent went into the general road fund to pay for tools and equipment. The county had a roadmaster and each district had a person in charge as well.

Looking through a few months' worth of *Madras Pioneer* issues from the early 1920s gives an indication of how much the state of the roads affected daily life. Almost every issue gave a road report from some part of the county.

"A road crew is doing some commendable work on the road running south from Madras Main Street where it turns west to the Strasser farm," a Pioneer editor wrote in February 1920. "The hill at that place has cost the people of the county hundreds of dollars in automobile springs which this work will eliminate."

The next month, in a short article entitled "Hard Trip by Ford," the *Pioneer* describes a journey undertaken by Sheriff Ira P. Holcomb and an associate through Metolius, Culver, the Cove, Grandview and Geneva and back via Terrebonne and Opal City in which they found the roads almost impassible due to snow and mud.

The road work was often accomplished by hiring local homesteaders needing to supplement their meager farm income, using what equipment they had. *Casual and Factual Glimpses*, referenced above, describes road-building in the early 20th century: "Road scrapers were 'drags' hauled by horses and mules. Contractors 'blew' stumps out of the right-of-way with black powder or dug them out with mattocks and men. Cuts were cleared and fills were made with wheelbarrows, shovels, dump wagons, slips and fresnos."

After World War I, the federal government gave the states surplus Nash Quad trucks, which had been used extensively by the military because these early four-wheel-drive trucks were the best vehicles available for driving on rough, muddy roads. In 1919, the state of Oregon loaned one indefinitely to Jefferson County for use in road-building, which must have been much appreciated.

Mecca Grade (Luelling Photo).

Horses pulling Fresno at Muddy Ranch.

The local road system got another boost from the state in 1919 when the legislature instituted the Market Road Program, levying state taxes to build, maintain and improve connections between smaller communities.

In April 1920, the Jefferson County Court designated its market roads and an amount of funding for each: Madras to Mecca-- $1,000; Madras to Ashwood-- $5,000; Culver to Grandview-- $3,000; Metolius to Grizzly-- $1,872.30. These same roads were designated as market roads the following year, with the addition of Gateway to Trout Creek. At some point, others must have been added because the state's map, available on the ODOT website, shows a few more. (See map, page 16)

The total expenditures for these roads were listed in the county budget separately from the road districts. In 1921, working funds for the road districts added up to $13,481.71, compared to a total of $12,504 for the market roads.

The state Legislature discontinued the market roads program in 1931. By the time it had wrapped up in 1933, Oregon had spent $33,542,057 statewide on market roads.

The process whereby roads have been created and added to the county road system through the years has been carefully documented by the Jefferson County Road Department in bound registers and in drawers full of legal documents. The documents are arranged alphabetically by the name of the road in envelope-sized folders, each little package a treasure waiting to be discovered by a historian or genealogist. Some of the documents date back before the establishment of Jefferson County, including one from 1898.

To establish a new road in Jefferson County and in Crook County before 1914, petitioners had to collect signatures from neighbors, pay a $200

filing fee, and post notice of the petition along the road and at the county courthouse. The proposed road had to be surveyed and "viewed," and affidavits filed by the surveyors and viewers before the county court would rule on it.

In her *Jefferson County Reminiscences* chapter on transportation, Mrs. William Brownhill describes one motivation behind the landowner petitions for county roads: "It was not unusual, but nonetheless disconcerting, for a homesteader upon making a trip to town, to find on his return, that a barbed wire fence had been erected, closing the road which he had traveled that very morning when he left home. So roads were mapped out and petitions circulated and presented to the county court at Prineville by public spirited volunteers to legally establish public lanes of travel."

County roads were typically named after the landowners whose property they adjoined, but, unfortunately, in 1951 the North Unit Irrigation District undertook to rename the roads alphabetically. A committee was established with instructions to choose any names it wanted as long as they ran alphabetically. The committee ultimately chose to name east-west roads after trees and north-south roads after rivers. This was an organized system, but one which has obscured a small piece of county history. For original names of some Jefferson County roads, see Steve Lent's *Central Oregon Place Names, Volume II: Jefferson County*.

Jefferson County currently has 260 miles of paved or chip-sealed roads, 205 miles of graded, graveled roads, and 131 miles of unimproved dirt roads. According to current Roadmaster Mike McHaney, the backbone of our county road system was established before and shortly after the formation of Jefferson County. The last time significant numbers of county roads were added to the county inventory was in the 1960s and '70s when many new subdivisions were built. While new subdivisions have been built since, McHaney said that the county has stopped adding their streets to the county road system because the county already has all the roads it can afford to maintain.

In other words, the era of new road construction is past, but the era of road repair goes on and on.

Author's note:

There were many roads through Central Oregon dating back to the 1800s and much earlier, if you count trails used by Native Americans. I did not attempt to write about them because the complexity of the subject is beyond the scope of THE AGATE. Those interested in reading about pioneer roads through Central Oregon will find the following well-researched books at the Jefferson County Library:

Pioneer Roads in Central Oregon by Lawrence E. Nielsen, Doug Newman and George McCart. Bend: Maverick Publications, 1985

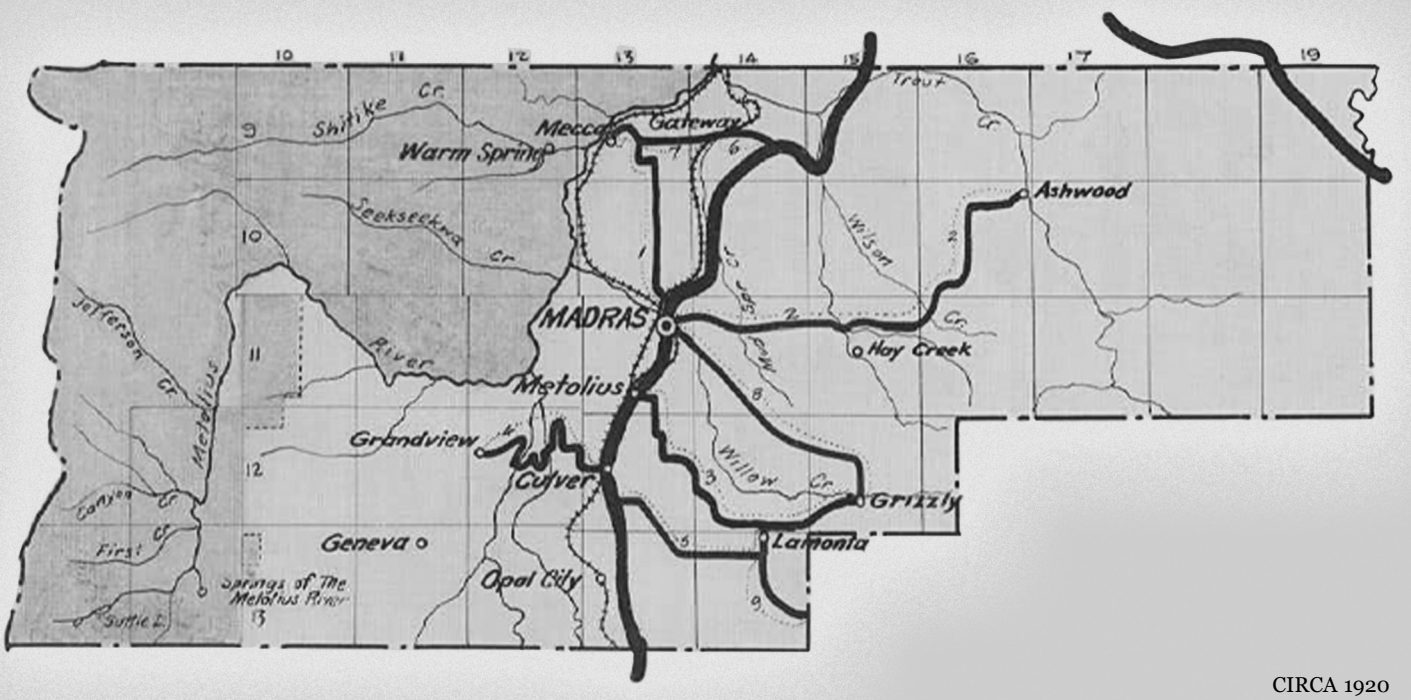
In the Ruts of the Wagon Wheels: Pioneer Roads in Eastern Oregon by Lawrence E. Nielsen. Bend: Maverick Publications, 1987.

Roads and Rails South from the Columbia: Transportation and Economic Development in MidColumbia and Central Oregon by John F. Due and Frances Juris Rush. Bend: Maverick Publications, 1991

Mrs. William Brownhill, "Transportation," in Jefferson County Reminiscences. Portland: Binford and Mort, 1998.

Oregon State Highway Department
JEFFERSON COUNTY MARKET ROADS

1. *Madras - Mecca*
2. *Madras - Ashwood*
3. *Metolius - Grizzle*
4. *Culver - Grandview*
5. *Culver - Lamonta*
6. *Gateway - Trout Creek*
7. *Gateway - Mecca*
8. *Madras - Grizzly*
9. *Lamonta - Prineville*



CIRCA 1920

Girls' Basketball Game in 1909, MADRAS VS. WARM SPRINGS

-- from Ethel Klann Cornwell, *Rimrocks and Water Barrels* (Monona, WI: Lakeside Press, 1979)

One of the unexpected treasures in the "Ed Mason" glass-plate photo collection recently added to the JCHS photo archives shows a basketball game being played on an outdoor court by girls in bloomers—apparently teams from Madras and Warm Springs, sometime before WWI.

Photo by Ed Mason --members of the Madras team. Left to right: Lorena Hill, Nora Livingston, Jennie Harper, Ethel Klann, May Campbell.

The photo is rare from several angles—early inter-racial girls' basketball game outdoors, on the Central Oregon frontier?! But thanks to a little historical hunch-playing (history relies on hunches), we've managed to identify the date, place, and occasion of the game, and some of the players. The hunch involved looking through one of the best local homesteading memoirs, Rimrocks and Water Barrels, by Ethel Klann Cornwell, published in 1979. Mrs. Cornwell was a member of the Klann family, 1905 homesteaders on north Agency Plains and still farming prominently there—Harold (past JCHS Director), Brad, and Seth Klann are all descendants of her family.

Here is her recollection of that long-ago game:

" . . . During the school year [1909], any physical education activity took place on the school grounds, the real innovation being the making of an outdoor basketball court, something quite unknown to the area previously, but welcomed with enthusiasm by the students. Boys were in the minority so girls were allowed to play too, using the same rules and usually as a mixed group. W.R. Cook, who was grade school principal, was the coach. Someone was always practicing after hours on the court, among them the girls who stayed in town and who had few home chores to do. They practiced throwing baskets from the foul line especially, and Prudy [the author, Ethel Klann Cornwell], who entered into the new sport with all the vim she and Esther had shown in learning to play "One Old Cat" or "Work-up" on the ball diamond, skipping rope with all the intricate moves perfected to the count of 100, at games of hopscotch played through without making a mistake, they played every moment possible between doing chores and dishes after walking their 7 or 8 mile stretch to and from school daily. Practicing free throws and catching the ball as it was tossed about perfected Prudy's techniques until she was rewarded by being selected as a forward on the first team.

Then Coach Cook announced that he had received an invitation for the Madras girls' team to play the Indian girls' team at the [Warm Springs] Agency in the near future. This was the first exchange there had been between schools and excitement ran high. Chosen for the team were May Campbell, center; Nora Livingston, whose parents operated the Green Hotel, and Lorena Hill were guards; Prudy Klann and Iva Bell, forwards, with Jennie Harper, substitute . . . But each girl had to

provide her own way of getting to the Agency. A number of families planned to go but each had the vehicles filled with their crowd. Prudy consulted her father but he had other things that couldn't be put off that day so he couldn't take her. Lorena, too, was having difficulties, so as a last resort Prudy decided to ask the [Methodist] minister, Rev. Moorhead, if he would allow them to ride his ponies, which were not used so much for riding as for his buggy team. Since he didn't need them that day which would be Saturday, he said the girls could take them, provided they be very careful as he wasn't sure how they might react to the handling by girls, although they were very gentle normally.

The girls had made suits of a dull green denim cut with a sailor-collared, elbow-sleeved blouse attached to the plain, hip-fitting bloomers, gathered with elastic at the knee. They wore long black stockings and tennis shoes. They found the Indian girls similarly dressed in dark blue suits, the full bloomers pleated at the waist and longer, making the white girls feel a little risqué' in their less baggy ones.

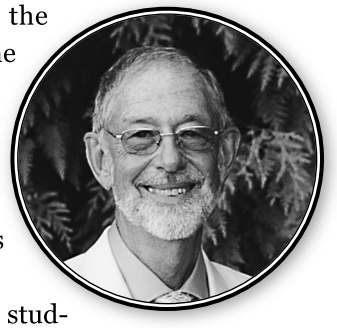
Prudy and Lorena carried their play clothes along with their lunch and oats for the horses, fastened to the backs of the saddles. It was nearly noon when they arrived, traveling the nearly 15 miles practically alone, meeting two or three persons—one, an Indian man on a shrub and tree-lined stretch of road not far from the ferry crossing [across the Deschutes upstream from the present-day Rainbow Market], which caused a few moments of concern, but he only smiled broadly at the two who may have presented a comical appearance, and went on his way.

Photo by Ed Mason --1909 basketball game (date unknown) between Madras High School and Warm Springs girls' teams, at Warm Springs (Ethel Klann on right)

The game was scheduled for 1:30 and a fair crowd lined both sides of the court. The play moved along quite lively with a pretty even score, and cheers and "rooting" from the sidelines spurred the teams to their best endeavors. Memory fails on the total score at the finish but the Madras girls carried off the last few points and went home with the laurels. It never worked out for the game to be returned, and Prudy's schedule for the rest of her high school days allowed very little basketball. The trip home seemed a little shorter to the horseback girls than the morning ride over, but it was two pretty tired girls who returned the ponies to their owners at suppertime that Saturday evening . . . . ."

Historical News

In Memoriam Steve Rankin, Colleague and Friend



Historical Society members joined the Madras community in mourning the tragic death of long-time JCHS member, director, and officer Steve Rankin in a car accident on June 4, 2015. His wife, Lisbet Hornung, survived the crash with serious injuries. They were returning home to Madras after an extended trip to Denmark.

A much-loved and respected teacher of social studies at Madras High School for many years, after his retirement Rankin served the community generously and capably as a volunteer: as a director of the Jefferson County Arts Association and the 509-J Special Education District, as Chair of the CASA Board, and as a director and long-time vice-president of the Historical Society. He was an avid athlete and outdoorsman, and served as a boatsman and guide on local rivers.

Steve Rankin (right foreground), and his fellow JCHS Directors l. to r: Elaine Henderson, Wanda Buslach, Betty Fretheim, Dan Chamness, Charlene McKelvy, Tom Manning, Jennie Smith, Lottie Holcomb, Becky Roberts, Dave Campbell.

According to JCHS Past President Jarold Ramsey, "Steve contributed indispensably to every good step the Society has taken over the last decade, and he will be greatly missed as we move forward." A gathering of tributes to him has been posted on the JCHS Website: http://www.jeffcohistorical.org.

Family, friends, and colleagues will celebrate his life and career on Saturday, Sept. 26, 2-5 pm, at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds; and a "Steve Rankin Memorial Scholarship Fund" has been set up at Washington Federal Bank.

Progress on Westside Community Center

Progress is being made (although not as rapidly as any of us would like) on the Westside Community Center initiative, through which Westside School will become a community center, with the JCHS Historical Museum re-opening in the south wing.

Under the leadership of the Bean Foundation, architects and consulting engineers have been systematically evaluating Westside, leading to a summary report on cost estimates due later this fall, on the basis of which the Bean Foundation will decide whether to go ahead with the initiative. If the decision is affirmative (and indications are that it will be), then the Foundation and the Friends of Westside Advisory Group (including JCHS) will shift attention to large-scale fundraising to cover upgrade and renovation costs, and also to planning for the administration and operation of the center.

An extensive program of visits by George Neilson and Clint Jacks and others with community groups this past spring and summer elicited widespread support of the Community Center initiative, and generated a lot of excellent ideas about what the Center ought to be, and what activities it ought to include.

The Historical Society is eagerly looking ahead to planning the new museum at Westside, and (with crucial input from JCHS members and others in the community) making it a reality.

"History Pubs" Resume

After an extended hiatus because of our Great Earth host Garry Boyd's serious injury last spring and his recovery (suc cessful!), the very popular JCHS "History Pubs" series at Great Earth Deli in Madras will resume on Thursday Oct. 29. The program will start at 5:30 pm. The topic: "Ed Mason's Madras: Glass-plate Photos of Our Town 1908-1916." The presenter will be Jerry Ramsey.

In 2013, the Society was given (by the Watts family) a priceless collection of 70-plus early glass negatives, taken by early Madras resident (and first County Coroner) Ed Mason and it has ensured their archival survival by digitalizing them. "Ed Mason's Madras" will give you a rare street-side view of Madras and the countryside around it during the railroad and homesteading boom era. Highlights to look for: a unique photograph of a 1909 girls' basketball game being played outdoors, and some spectacular Ansel Adams-like alpine shots taken in the Central Oregon Cascades around 1910.

The idea behind the History Pubs is to present local history in an informal, convivial setting. Local beers and wines and snacks will be available at Great Earth.

JCHS "History Hike" October 24

JCHS Director Dan Chamness is organizing a "history hike" along the Deschutes River trail from Trout Creek Campground to Frog Springs and return, Saturday October 24. The trail follows the historical Jim Hill "Oregon Trunk" route upriver, with an extension for those interested up to the base of the Trout Creek rock climbing area. "Experts" on local history, flora and fauna and especially raptors in the area, and rock-climbing will be on hand to comment on features of the route. –For details, contact Dan Chamness (chamness@crestviewcable.com), and look for coverage in the *Pioneer*.

Memorial Gifts to the JCHS

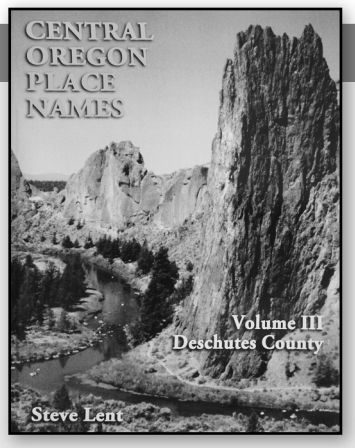
One way to remember and honor a relative or friend who has passed on—especially someone who has had an interest in local history—is to make a memorial gift in that person's name to the Jefferson County Historical Society. Often newspaper obituaries will list the JCHS and other organizations and charities to which well-wishers are invited to make contributions in honor of their late relative or friend. The JCHS is a non-profit organization, registered with the IRS, and donations and gifts to it are generally tax-deductible. Families of the deceased are always notified by the Society of contributions made in honor of their loved ones.

MEMORIAL DONATIONS AND GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY FROM JANUARY THROUGH AUGUST 2015:

Alpha Omicron – Chapter 3115
Charles Cunningham
Sharon Nesbit
Margie McBride Lehrman and the GE Foundation
Kate Ramsey and Tim Watson
Rose Foster Estate
Beth Crow Living Trust

In Memory of Norm Weigand:
Jean Green

Book Reviews



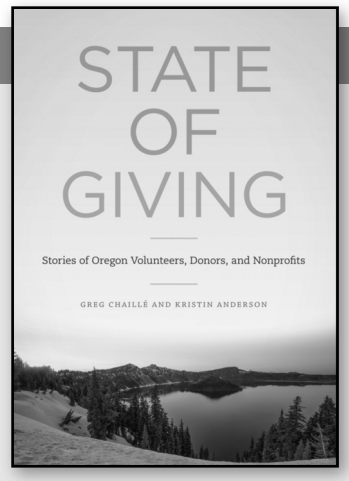
Steve Lent,
Central Oregon Place Names, Vol. III: Deschutes County. Prineville and Bend:. Crook County Historical Society and Maverick Publications, 2015

Readers who have already discovered the first two volumes of Steve Lent's magnum opus on the place names of Central Oregon—covering Crook and Jefferson Counties—will rejoice that the third and final volume, on Deschutes County, is at last available. It is a worthy culmination to the series, marking the completion of probably the most ambitious and wide-reaching historical research project ever undertaken in our region.

It might be said that Lent's three volumes are to Crook, Jefferson, and now Deschutes County history and geography what McArthur's venerated *Oregon Geographic Names* is to the state at large—but in fact the comparison would be unfair to Lent, in that he has much more to offer his readers in the way of local history and lore, anecdotes about pioneers and what they did, and photographs, than what's given in McArthur's brief and often eccentric entries.

Preparing and completing this Deschutes County volume must have been an especially tall order, given the size and diverse history of the county—and the fact that both Bend and Redmond have grown so dramatically over the last quarter-century, with so many new roads and developments, that city maps are at the risk of being out-of-date as soon as they are published. Lent's book seems to have met this challenge of new place-names effectively (even including the 2012 creation of "Ashton Eaton Boulevard" in LaPine), although, inevitably, a few well-established places and their stories have escaped him, like "Forest Crossing," the pioneer bridge over Crooked River upstream from "Trail Crossing" (which is listed in the Jefferson County volume but omitted here), and oddly enough, given their long-standing prominence, landmarks around Smith Rock State Park, like "Squaw Rock," "Burma Road," "Morning Glory Wall," and "Misery Ridge."

One might also wish for a map of modern Deschutes County to go with the early maps at the back of the book, and the nearly 1000 entries and 300 photos in it. But these are very minor complaints in view of Lent's major achievement in this volume and the whole series. If you propose to become an expert on Central Oregon history and "the lay of the land" in these parts, start with Phil Brogan's *East of the Cascades* and Steve Lent's *Central Oregon Place Names*.



Greg Chaille` and Kristin Anderson,
State of Giving: Stories of Oregon Volunteers, Donors, and Nonprofits. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015.

On the face of it, a book on the current state of philanthropy and community activism in Oregon might seem like something to be read only out of civic duty, the way most of us dutifully open the bundles

of charitable solicitations in our morning mail.

But in fact *State of Giving* is a very important, informative, and timely book, and reading it will reward you with some inspiring stories about what Oregonians are doing for the betterment of their communities and the state. It will also bring you sternly up to date on how far Oregon is from living up to its social and cultural ideals and its reputation as a place to call home.

Authors Greg Chaillé (President of the Oregon Community Foundation throughout its formative years) and Kristin Anderson maintain a sort of rhythm between positives and negatives, as they survey some of Oregon's defining challenges: the "urban-rural divide" (which tends to overlay our old familiar east-west geopolitical divide), our less-than-acceptable public education record, our growing troubles with homelessness and hunger in our citizenry, the famous but uneven Oregonian commitment to preservation of our natural environment, the mixed story of racial and ethnic inclusion and equity in the state, and the ways we support (and don't support) the arts and our cultural-heritage institutions.

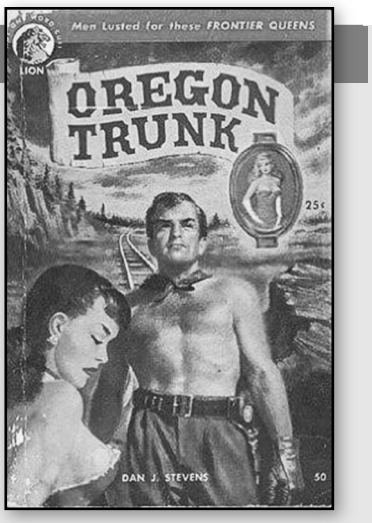
In exploring each of these subjects, the authors offer vivid and appealing accounts of large-scale philanthropy and grass-roots volunteerism across our state, featuring generous and unassuming people making big differences for the common good—and then their upbeat storytelling turns to a sober (and very well-informed) assessing of what's still lacking in our society despite such generous giving of money and volunteer effort. Chapter after chapter, this alternation of auspicious examples and sobering assessments is very effective, presenting a balanced picture of what's wrong with our state and what can be done about it by involved citizens.

It's gratifying that in their chapter on support for the arts and cultural heritage programs Chaillé and Anderson spotlight the Jefferson County Historical Society and its efforts to conserve and promote local history, while working to get the Society's museum collection out of storage and into a new museum, being planned as part of a community center in the old Madras High School. JCHS members will be interested in comparing the depiction of their society with parallel accounts of organizations such as "Oregon Black Pioneers" (in Salem), "Tamastlikt Cultural Institute" (near Pendleton), and others across the state. One of the book's arguments is that, as not-for-profit associations, we have much to learn from each other.

A gap in *State of Giving's* otherwise very-well-thought-out coverage of the place of philanthropy and volunteerism in the Oregon scheme of things is that it does not consider the state's increasing reliance on the Oregon Lottery for support of education, social services, our State Parks, the State Fair, and so on. One wonders, is our heavy dependence on income from Lottery "giving" (largely by people who can ill afford it) a healthy state of affairs for the cause of social betterment here?

But let it be said again that this is a landmark book, generous in its recognition of Oregon's donors and activists, acute and forthright in its analysis of our social shortcomings, and very engagingly written. It should be in every library in the state—and why shouldn't it be widely incorporated in our high school social-science classes?

This is by no means a new book and it is definitely not to everyone's taste, but it has some worthwhile qualities that recommend it to the right reader. As its title states, this novel concerns the Oregon Trunk railroad and more specifically the railroad war that took place



DAN J. STEVENS,
Oregon Trunk. New York: Bouregy & Curl, 1950. (This book was originally published under a pen name and subsequently released in Large Print under the real name of the author, Wayne D. Overholser.)

in these parts from 1909-11 between James J. Hill and Edward H. Harriman as their respective interests each laid a set of tracks up the Deschutes River Canyon.

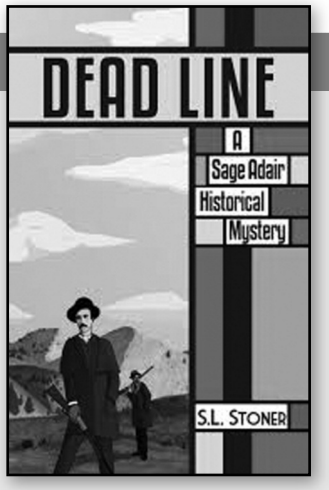
It was a tumultuous time in Central Oregon and a perfect setting for a western romance like this one. True to its genre, the novel includes a corny love story about a tough and wild railroad man who thinks he loves the racy brunette but is gradually tamed by a sweet, smart blond. If you can stomach that bit of cheese, you will find that the historical background of the book is surprisingly well researched.

A prolific writer of westerns, Overholser was also an Oregon native and a graduate of the

University of Oregon, with a degree in history. In this novel, he plays up an interesting aspect of the railroad war rarely touched upon in other sources—the idea, kicked around briefly before the railroad war began, of building a "people's railroad."

Central Oregon languished for years without a railroad or other adequate means to travel or carry freight into and out of the region. Railroad magnate Harriman had made so many unfulfilled promises and the residents hereabouts had become so desperate, that the state legislature voted to put a measure on the ballot allowing public entities to issue bonds to build railroads and also to condemn existing railroads. The thought was to use public funds to extend the existing Columbia Southern line between The Dalles and Shaniko all the way to Bend. Then the railroad war began and the ballot measure was moot.

Overholser exaggerates the importance of the people's railroad movement for the sake of his story, but some artistic license is to be expected. We read non-fiction books to learn historical facts, but works of historical fiction, like this one, have value because they help us imagine what it was like back then. And it is a particular pleasure to read a story that takes place in such a familiar setting.



S.L. STONER,
A Sage Adair Historical Mystery of the Pacific Northwest.
Portland OR: Yamhill Press, 2015

This is the latest novel in Portland author S.L. Stoner's series and the only one not set in Portland. Instead, it is 1903 and her detective heads to Prineville to investigate the trouble between cattle ranchers and sheepherders. There has been some violence, Adair's colleague, Charlie Siringo, tells him, and more has been threatened. Adair is not particularly interested in tackling the case until Siringo mentions that Adair's former girlfriend, Lucinda, is currently in Prineville. Next thing he knows, he's on a stage coach careening down Cow Canyon. Yes, there's a love story in this one too, but the novel is chock full of local history.

Stoner is a retired labor union lawyer who began writing her Sage Adair series as a vehicle for educating people about labor history. Most of Adair's cases involve solving injustices on behalf of working people and the subjects typically illuminate some aspect of the early 1900s.

In writing this episode, Stoner spent several days in the Bowman Museum in Prineville doing research on Prineville and Crook County during this time period. Prior to that, she had been reading up on the subject from home for about a year and a half. In addition to the range war, she incorporates a small pox epidemic that really occurred, the first electrical plant in Central Oregon, gold prospecting, land fraud schemes, and a few names of real people. A helpful afterword explains which parts of the story were based on real events and adds a few details.

Stoner's series is heavy on history but light on character development. She does pretty well with the plot and pacing and, as noted in the preceding review, it is enjoyable to read a story about places we know well.

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Website: www.jeffcohistorical.org

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MEMBERSHIP DUES 2015:
(Individual: $25 Family: $50 Patron: $150 Benefactor: $500)

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Address:_____

City:_____ State:_____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Membership (please check box):

☐ New ☐ Renewal ☐ Individual

☐ Family ☐ Patron ☐ Benefactor

(Make check out to JCHS; mail to address at left)

☐ Yes, I'm interested in becoming a History Volunteer

☐ Yes, I would like to make a donation to the JCHS (the Society is a registered non-profit organization; donations and gifts to it are tax-deductible)

☐ I have artifacts, photos, written material I would like to donate to the JCHS Museum